

A real expert by Jancys-Blue-Bayou

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Summary: Will's POV as he observes how happy his brother is with Nancy, but also how Dustin has started to turn into a jerk thanks to Steve's bad advice on girls. So Will recruits a real expert to talk some sense into his friend: Nancy.

A real expert

He has a lot of questions when he comes to. Namely where they are, what happened and why it's so hot. His mom and Jonathan has just released him from the tight embrace they held him in, he's now leaning on his brother's big, broad, *safe* shoulder, Jonathan's hand strokes his hair while his mom holds onto him from the other side. They're drenched in sweat, just like Nancy, who's come into the room, sitting down on a chair next to the bed. She's looking at him with wide eyes and he can feel Jonathan and his mom looking intently at him while they caress him. His mom answers the first question.

"Hopper's cabin."

He didn't know Hopper has a cabin, so that doesn't tell him much. Jonathan gives one answer to the following two questions.

"We had to get it out of you."

It is the Shadow Monster. And it's out. He can feel it. He feels like himself again. He feels tired and drained, but like himself. He also feels a stinging, burning sensation on his side. They have questions for him too. Or well, it's just one question but they all ask it in different forms, all at once.

"How are you feeling, sweetheart?"

"Are you okay, buddy?"

"Will, are you okay?"

"I'm okay," he answers. It comes out soft, almost a whisper. His voice is weak, throat strained from yelling. He tentatively touches the stinging spot on his side.

"Sorry I had to do that to you," Nancy tells him then.

"You had to," Jonathan quickly says and his mom nods.

He doesn't remember getting this mark, but he assumes it was

necessary like they say. Nancy wouldn't do it otherwise of course.

"Thank you," he tells her.

Nancy nods and then glances at Jonathan. That's when it hits him. That Jonathan is here. And he was here before, talking to him about Castle Byers and playing *Should I Stay Or Should I Go*. But he wasn't there before. At the Lab or at the house before they went to save Hopper. But now he's here, with Nancy for some reason he doesn't know either.

"Where have you been?" He asks his brother, curious. He didn't have a chance to think about it before, given everything, but Jonathan's absence was odd. If he's not in school or working he's always there.

"I'm sorry buddy, I'm so sorry I wasn't there," Jonathan hurriedly apologizes, voice shaky and frail. Will's not sure why he's apologizing. It wasn't an accusation, just a question.

"He was with me. He was helping me," Nancy says.

That makes sense. Jonathan is always helping. And since he wasn't with them, that it was because he was helping Nancy makes sense. Jonathan likes Nancy. That much he's been able to figure out since last fall. Why his brother hasn't done anything about it though, especially after Nancy gave him a camera and a kiss on the cheek for Christmas, he's not been able to figure out. But maybe he finally has now. Sure seems like he's missed some things.

"Helping with what?" He asks.

"Getting justice against the Lab. For what they did to all of us. To Barb..." Nancy starts.

"And to you," Jonathan adds.

He nods.

"How?" He asks, and he sees out of the corner of his eye that his mom looks intrigued as well.

"You'll see soon. We've put... *part* of the truth out there. They're going

to have to answer for what they've done," Jonathan tells him.

"Cool," he says and hopes his brother understands that he's not upset about him not being there when it all happened with him. He didn't know, couldn't know it would happen. "Where are the others? Mike... Hopper... Bob?" He asks next. His mom tenses.

"Mike's back at your house," Nancy informs him.

"Hopper is with Eleven... Eleven is back. She's going to close the gate. We're waiting for that," Jonathan tells him.

"Eleven is back?"

"Yes. If anyone can close the gate, it's her," Nancy says.

He nods.

"Bob?" He prods again. His mom makes a tiny noise and tenses up even more.

"I'm sorry buddy he's... he's gone," Jonathan supplies in his shaky voice.

"Oh," is all he can think to say.

They sit quiet after that. He has more questions but no energy to ask them. Jonathan keeps stroking his hair and his mom keeps rubbing his arm gently. They sit and wait, for what he's not exactly sure until suddenly all the lights in the room become bright, so bright. They all look around.

"El..." Nancy breathes out.

"She closed it," his mom says.

"You did it buddy," Jonathan says after breathing a sigh of relief.

"Me?"

"You told us to close it," Jonathan says.

Right. He still feels it's more Eleven's credit though.

"Let's go home," his mom says.

He dances with Rebecca Quinn for two songs, they're slow and really sappy, he doesn't know the bands because it's really far from the stuff he likes, the stuff Jonathan puts on mix tapes for him. There's a fast song after the two slow ones and Rebecca lets go of him, so he instantly drops his arms to his side too. She says that it was nice and smiles before walking off towards the bleachers. He looks around and sees more couples parted after the slow songs stopped. Maybe she just wanted someone, anyone, to dance with for those slow songs. That's fine. He knows people make a big deal out of dancing to slow songs even though he's never done it before and wasn't really planning to do it now either. He's glad he accepted his mother's last minute dance lesson anyway. It was fine, dancing. Though he'd felt like he was stiff as a plank, and found himself glancing over towards Mike who was dancing with Eleven. Mike had been the one to push him when he didn't know what to say to Rebecca. He was really shocked when she asked him to dance. She sits next to him in English but they don't really talk. But she's fine. He could've done without the "Hey Zombie Boy" though. And truthfully, he feels he'd rather have sat drinking punch with Mike to the side than dance with Rebecca. Talked with Mike, joked with Mike. Really done anything with Mike... maybe even dance with Mike... But he knows that's not happening, he knows he shouldn't feel that way. Mike's his best friend, plus he loves Eleven anyway. He's so happy for Mike, he's been so down this whole year, depressed about the loss of Eleven. But now he's so happy since she returned, even though Hopper's hid El away at the cabin with only limited contact with the rest of them, Mike's still been happier than in a year. And now Eleven is here tonight and he can see Mike's huge smile all the way over here.

Lucas and Max are still dancing too, Lucas likewise with a big grin, and he can see that Max is smiling too. Max is really cool, he thinks. He's only gotten to really know her in the last few weeks and she's nice and cool. Lucas has filled him in on what he missed during that crazy week too. Like Max taking a nail bat to her racist psycho step brother's balls. That's really badass. He wishes he'd had the courage to do something like that to his dad sometime. He spots Dustin sitting alone at a table, contently eating snacks from a plate. He makes his

way over and sits down next to his friend.

"Hey."

"Hey man, how was it?"

"How was what?"

"Duh! Dancing with Rebecca!"

"Oh! It was fine."

"Just fine?"

"I mean, it was okay. Just weird, I don't get why she asked me, we never talk or anything."

"Girls are a mystery," Dustin leans back in his chair and puts his hands behind his head, looking like he's got all the answers in the world to questions he's not sure he asked.

He just shrugs in response.

"Myself I danced with Nancy," Dustin smiles widely, showing off his still relatively new teeth.

"Really?" He asks, surprised. He looks over to the table where he last saw Nancy, serving punch, but doesn't find her there. He looks over to Jonathan's portrait photos station instead. Nancy's there, smiling at his brother who smiles back and says something. Jonathan does that a lot now. Smiles. More than he ever has before. He knows the reason why, he thinks as Nancy then leans up and kisses Jonathan's cheek.

"Yep. That'll show 'em."

"Show who?" He wonders but Dustin doesn't hear the question or just ignores it.

"It was awesome."

"Yeah, that's cool of her," he agrees. "She's cool."

"Yeah she is."

She really is, Nancy. He doesn't get why Mike sometimes harps on about how "lame" she supposedly is, she's really cool. He's always liked her, she's always been nice to him when he's been over at the Wheelers. And he's seen a lot of her this last month. After the whole Shadow Monster affair came to an end he was home from school for a few days, his mom and Jonathan staying home to take care of him while getting the house back in order. And Nancy came over to help with the latter. For hours. Before she left Jonathan had a long hushed conversation with her on the porch. When he came back inside his lips were a different shade of red than before, now matching Nancy's. After that he had to ask his brother about what actually happened while he was gone. Jonathan told him how they got taken into the lab, made the tape and went to Sesser in Illinois to meet with the investigative journalist and made up the story they sent out to the papers to take down the lab (the actual story broke later that week). And while blushing profusely Jonathan also told him that while they were doing all of that he and Nancy "sort of... talked. About, stuff... feelings... a lot came to the surface." He then added how Nancy came home with him when Jonathan got worried as no one was answering when he called home, and how she went to the lab with him to find them, and how she came with them to the cabin "because I needed her". When he then pressed Jonathan on if Nancy was his girlfriend now, he got an affirmative response from his blushing brother. He then told Jonathan the truth, that that's cool and he's really happy for him. Because Nancy makes him really happy. Just look at him tonight. His brother is standing in the middle school gym, for a dance he knows Jonathan never was interested in attending himself when he was in middle school, and listening to music he despises – but he's been smiling all throughout the evening. And it's because of the girl who's now fiddling with his tie while saying something that causes Jonathan to laugh.

Later that same evening when Jonathan told him Nancy was his girlfriend he overheard their mother telling Jonathan "she knows she's welcome here anytime right? Anytime." Since the ordeal they've settled into a new normal. For him personally it means still being gawked at school as Zombie Boy but also that his episodes are finally over and he feels better, better than he has in a year. His mom fusses over him a lot, and grieves Bob. And for Jonathan the new normal means he's spending more time out of the house than ever before. It

used to be that if he wasn't at school or working, Jonathan could always be found at home. Which was great for Will, always having his awesome brother on hand for advice and company and support. But it's even better now, when Jonathan isn't always there because it means he's out with Nancy, the thought of which makes Will happy. They spend a lot of time at home too, Jonathan and Nancy and that's awesome too. When they're not in Jonathan's room they're in the living room, happy to watch movies or play games on the Atari with him. Nancy's really competitive and wants him to teach her so she can beat Mike someday. It's an ongoing project. Another benefit of Nancy being over a lot is Jonathan pulls out all the stops in the kitchen when he's cooking, which is really nice for all of them. But bottom line is it's just awesome to see his brother so happy.

His brother is happy and his friends are happy, which makes him happy. As the months pass Hopper lets up more and more with El, allowing her to see them which makes everyone happy but most of all Mike. Mike's so happy with Eleven, and Eleven seems so happy too. He notices a slight change in the Party though. They still hang out all together, but sometimes Mike and Eleven hangs out just the two of them, and Lucas and Max the same. That's fine by him since they're all happy and he likes seeing his friends happy. And it's not like they have to do everything together, sometimes it's just him and Mike hanging out too. But Dustin doesn't seem as happy about it. Really, Dustin hasn't seemed as happy as the rest of them for the past months. He behaves kind of odd too. He knows Dustin to be kind and funny, but now he's not all that fun always. Dustin and Lucas have always bickered and teased each other but it used to be more good natured, now he thinks Dustin is pretty snippy with Lucas. And he'll say some douchy things to Max, like talking down to her even though Max is really smart. And he'll sometimes act weird around girls in school too. Say something nice to them but then act aloof or be dismissive if they say something back. Jennifer Hayes even asked him once what's wrong with Dustin but he didn't know what to answer.

Another weird thing is that Dustin will go off to spend time with Steve Harrington. Dustin and Lucas have told him how Steve helped them out that week, and that's obviously cool. Steve seems pretty alright actually. He doesn't really know him of course, since he's five years older and not a friend of Jonathan's, actually being Nancy's ex.

Jonathan's said that Steve turned out to be "not the worst actually" and someone to count on for monster hunting, but they don't hang out outside of that. "Not much to talk about really", Jonathan said. And Lucas, Max and Mike don't see the need to hang out with Steve apart from that either. But Dustin seems to have stuff to talk to Steve about. He follows him around quite a bit. Sometimes Steve will drop Dustin off at the Arcade, sometimes Dustin won't even show up and explain the next day that he and Steve were hanging out instead. Which is... fine, Will thinks. Just slightly odd to him that Steve wants to hang around this kid five years younger than him. He thinks maybe it's like a brother thing, Dustin's an only child so, maybe he misses having an older brother. Having one like Jonathan is pretty awesome. That said he'd personally think it'd be weird to hang out with an older guy like that if he's not your brother. But to each their own. It's just... to him it seems Dustin hanging around Steve has correlated with Dustin becoming... not so much fun all the time.

Whenever Mike and Eleven or Lucas and Max want to do something by themselves Dustin rolls his eyes. Especially when it happens like today, when Mike and Eleven are on a bike ride alone, something they like to do just by themselves sometimes; and Lucas and Max at the same time are hanging out at Lucas's house alone. So Dustin came over to his house to play Atari. Which is fun. But it's not so fun if Dustin's going to complain about the other party members when it's just the two of them hanging out.

"Us single guys gotta stick together, right bud?" Dustin says as they start another round of *Moon Patrol*.

"Uh... what?"

"You and me bro. Just saying, with the others all coupled up... it's gonna affect the party."

"How?"

"Duh, with Mike and El all lovey-dovey and Lucas and Max too... that leaves you and me since they're gonna be off together being all couple-y like today."

"I don't know... it's not like we have to do everything together all of

us all the time?"

"I don't know, I guess, I'm just sayin'..."

"Like you, me, Lucas and Max went to the Arcade yesterday without Mike and El."

"Tell me about it, god they were so annoying playing Dig-Dug."

"You're just mad that she's still got top score," he josses but Dustin shakes his head.

"Nah dude, it's just irritating. And typical how they just wanna hang out together now. Steve said so, that people always get like that when they're all loved up, start blowing off their friends."

"I don't know... I mean we all had movie night on Tuesday but you didn't come..."

"Oh, me and Steve went out for burgers. But whatever that's not the point-"

"What is the point, if you blow us off sometimes and Lucas and Max or Mike and El does it sometimes, isn't it all the same?"

"It's way different," Dustin insists.

He just shrugs in response, focusing on the game and hoping the topic will be dropped.

"I just feel bad for them," Dustin continues.

"For who?"

"Lucas, Mike. Falling in love is a dangerous game."

"Dangerous game?" Who talks like that? Not Dustin.

"Especially at our age. They're just setting themselves up to get hurt. Girls are gonna break your heart and leave you. That's why I play it cool."

"You play it cool?"

"With girls, yeah. They're pretty stupid this age anyway. But you gotta know how to approach them."

"... by being nice?"

"I mean... I guess some, maybe? Steve says it depends. You gotta be either a lion or a ninja."

"Err... what?"

"Some girls want you to be strong and aggressive, like a lion. But others you gotta be more stealthy with, like a ninja."

"Uh... aggressive, really?"

"Yup."

"Who likes aggressive people?"

"I don't know, girls!"

"Steve told you that?"

"Yep. He's showing me the whole game. You gotta be smooth about this. Like you gotta pretend you don't care, it drives them nuts."

"How... wait, if the objective is to get the girl, how are they gonna know your interested if you act like you don't care about them?"

"Ah see, there's the trick. First you gotta make them think you care, get their attention, then you act like you don't care. Drives them wild."

"I don't know... isn't it better to just... be nice? I mean, Mike didn't do any of that to El, he was just nice."

"Well, that's different, that whole situation is just... different."

"Okay, but... I mean didn't you and Lucas both like Max?"

"I never liked her!"

"I kind of think you did... I mean I was there..."

"Okay, maybe I sort of liked her in the beginning, she seemed really cool but then she picked Lucas so whatever."

"... okay. Just um, did Lucas do any of that stuff?"

"Well, no but-"

"I think Max likes Lucas because Lucas is nice to her."

"Okay fine whatever maybe that's true but..."

"So I don't know if that stuff really works..."

"Well sorry but do you have a girlfriend?" Dustin challenges.

"No," he answers. Leaving out that he doesn't really want one either.

"Well then maybe that's why you don't get it."

"Okay... but uh... did you hear all this from Steve?"

"Yeah."

"Well... does Steve have a girlfriend?"

"Well not right now, but who knows more about girls than Steve Harrington?" Dustin retorts. He's about to challenge that statement but before he can Dustin adds something under his breath. "Plus he used to until your brother stole her..."

"What?!" He's been keeping his calm, he's just been trying to understand Dustin, even when what he's saying doesn't really make much sense. But that ticks him off. "Jonathan didn't steal Nancy!" He throws back.

"I don't know, kind of did..."

"No he didn't! Sorry Dustin, but you've turned into a real jerk lately!"

"Woah! Where did that come from?! Just because I said your brother-"

"No! Well, yes but not just that! You're acting weird! You're kind of a

douche to Max, and all this girl advice... what makes Steve the expert?"

"Uh, he's *Steve Harrington*!"

"Ugh! I can't take this anymore! If you're so curious I'm going to get you a real expert on girls!" He throws back, getting up and marching out of the room.

"Who?!" Dustin calls back.

"An actual girl! Wait in the kitchen," he calls over his shoulder as he goes to his brother's bedroom.

He knocks on the door and hears a faint "come in" over the Television song playing inside so he opens it. He finds Jonathan and Nancy sat on the bed, Scrabble board between them. So that's what teenage couples do behind closed doors...

"Hey," he says, closing the door behind him.

"Hey buddy, what's up?" His brother answers. Nancy smiles at him.

"I need your help. Dustin's driving me crazy."

"Um... okay..." Jonathan starts, confused.

"How?" Nancy asks.

"Ever since he started hanging out with Steve he's turned into... kind of a jerk. He acts like a douche to Max and other girls and I think Steve gave him some really bad advice... and he says dumb stuff like that you 'stole' Nancy from Steve or whatever."

"Steve said that?" Nancy's tone darkens.

"No! I don't know, Dustin said it, I don't know where he got it from. It's dumb and he just... he's acting all pissy with Lucas and Max, and Mike and El and... I don't know bottom line is he hangs on Steve's every word but I think Steve gave him some really bad advice about like, girls. Since you're a girl can you please talk to him?"

Nancy and Jonathan look at each other, smiles and shrugs. Then they turn back to him.

"Sure thing," Nancy smiles.

They get up off the bed and come with him into the kitchen where they find Dustin sat at the table eating a Nutter Butter he brought with him.

"Hey Nance. Jonathan."

"Hey Dustin," Nancy answers, taking a seat opposite him. Jonathan sits down next to her, so he sits down next to Dustin. "Okay so what's up, what's all this about girls and Steve's advice?" Nancy continues.

"I don't know, we just seem to have a gentlemen's disagreement," Dustin answers, looking at him.

"You've turned into a jerk," he plainly states.

"Hey!"

"Sorry Dustin but I'm your friend and as your friend I have to tell you!"

"Okay okay, calm down guys," Jonathan interrupts.

"Yeah, okay so what's all this about? Steve gave you advice?" Nancy asks.

"Yes."

"What advice?"

"About how to get girls."

"Okay. How do you get girls?"

Dustin squirms, but as Nancy keeps her gaze locked on him he starts to explain.

"Well, he said you have to act like you don't care, it drives girls nuts. But you have to use different techniques with different girls, some want you to be strong and aggressive, others you need to be more

stealthy with."

"Uh-huh."

"But he said you were different, special," Dustin hurriedly adds.

"Okay. Well. That's all terrible advice but I'll get to that in a minute. First of all, what did Steve say about me and Jonathan?"

"Nothing! Nothing," Dustin's eyes go big as he panics a little under Nancy's steadfast gaze.

"So what makes you think Jonathan 'stole' me?" Nancy is unrelenting.

"I... I mean, just how... I mean you and Steve were together, right? Then you two just disappeared off to that reporter guy but did you know Steve came to your house with flowers then?"

"No, I didn't know that."

"That's when we teamed up, I needed help with D'Art and when I couldn't find Mike or you or anyone else I ran into him when he came to your house with flowers and all. And he was upset about you disappearing, he warned me about falling in love, said that the girl will eventually just break your heart and leave you. And then you guys rolled back into town together so just... I mean what happened there...?"

It's so quiet around the table for a second, Dustin's words hanging over them. He glances to Nancy who's eyes are steely, determined.

"Okay. Dustin I'm going to lay this out very clear for you. Jonathan didn't steal me away from Steve. Stealing means you take something that belongs to someone else. Do you think I belonged to Steve? Do I belong to Jonathan now?"

"N-no! I didn't mean-"

"Jonathan did not steal me. Steve and I broke up. Jonathan and me got together because I want to be with Jonathan and he wants to be with me. Does anything else matter? Don't I decide who I want to be with?"

"Y-yes, of course, I mean..."

"So that's that. And I didn't just disappear on him. We had a big fight, two fights really and it wasn't just he who was hurt. We broke up and then I did what I did because it was what I wanted. I wanted to get justice against the Lab, I had to. We had to, so Jonathan and me went out and got it. Steve never understood that, how I felt about it. I told him but he didn't hear me. I'm sorry if Steve was hurt but I have no regrets. I'm sorry if I hurt him, but I was hurting, being with him."

"W-what?"

"It wasn't a good relationship. For either of us. He should be with someone he loves and who loves him. And I deserve that too. He wasn't it. He hurt me. I wasn't doing good, when I was with him. I had to hide who I really was. So we broke up. I wish we'd done it a different way, without all the mess and the hurt but... or maybe just never gotten back together in the first place, I would've avoided a lot of hurt then but..."

"I wish I had said something, last fall," Jonathan says softly, taking Nancy's hand.

"I wish I'd done the same. I wish I hadn't retreated from you," she says looking intently at Jonathan.

"We could've done a lot of things differently, last year," Jonathan says.

"Yeah," Nancy agrees. "But the past is the past. I don't want to get into it more but bottom line is, Jonathan didn't steal me away. Never say that again. About anyone."

"O-okay," Dustin answers.

"And sorry but Steve's advice? Dustin, it's bullshit. It's all bullshit."

"But-"

"No no, listen to me. It's bullshit. Who the hell wants someone to be aggressive towards them? Aggressiveness sucks! It's scary! And stealth? What does that even mean? You don't want some guy to be

all... sneaky and manipulative, you want them to be kind and honest. Like Jonathan."

His brother looks down at the table and blushes slightly.

"And what is that whole acting like you don't care thing? Do you want to know why I love Jonathan? Why I was always drawn to him? Because he cares! He cares about me and he didn't hide or tried to act like he didn't even before we got together. Speaking as a *girl*, that's what I want. A nice, kind, sweet, brave, funny, strong guy who cares about me and is supportive and actually gets me and understands me."

Jonathan is blushing even more now.

"Oh..." is all Dustin gets out.

"Dustin, it's not rocket science. How did you make friends? How do you want your friends to treat you?"

"Uh... being nice to me, being fun to be around..."

"Exactly, if that's what you want in a friend, someone who is nice and fun to be around why would you act different to a girlfriend or boyfriend? You'd want to be with them because they're fun to be around and you like them, right? So why wouldn't you be nice to them? That's what you'd want, and that's what they'd want, someone nice!"

"Okay... okay that makes uh... a lot of sense but uh... sounds kind of... simple."

"It is simple, Dustin. What more is there to it? People like it when you're nice to them. You like it when people are nice to you. So why be anything else?"

"Okay, right, sure but... I mean Steve said this stuff works... and hey you told me girls my age are dumb..."

He looks at Nancy, surprised. Jonathan looks at her too. Nancy raises her eyebrows and then shakes her head.

"Okay, Jesus I... I said that because I wanted to cheer you up Dustin and what I meant was... I mean yes, girls your age are dumb but boys are too! Everyone is kind of dumb at thirteen. But what I meant was that girls... maybe they don't appreciate you now, how nice, kind and sweet you are because society teaches us that we should respond to this macho jerk type for some stupid reason. It's so dumb, who would want that? So my point was they'll hopefully wise up eventually and realize that what they want is a nice, sweet guy. The kind of guy I know you to be! You've always been nice and sweet, that's what I like about you..."

"That's what we all like about you. You used to be the peacemaker of the party," he hurries to add.

"And that's what girls will eventually respond to! But if you've traded in being nice and kind and sweet for something else I mean... I for one would be very disappointed."

Dustin goes quiet after that. Pensive, looking dejected down at the table.

"You... you guys don't think I'm nice?"

"Sorry for the tough love," Nancy says in a softer tone.

"Dustin your my friend and I love you," he says. "Because you were nice and kind but lately... you're not nice to Max, and you're not nice about her and Lucas being together or Mike and Eleven, and I don't like that. Or how you talk to girls now, it's weird. I'm sorry but as your friend I have to tell you, if I started behaving like an ass I'd want you to call me out on it too."

"Just be yourself, Dustin. It's nice if you and Steve have fun hanging out, Steve is a good guy but his advice on this is just bad, sorry. Just be yourself because that's the guy we all like," Nancy says.

"Yeah, just be you. No one else is like you and that's awesome. Be that," Jonathan speaks for the first time in a while. Nancy smiles and rubs his arm.

"I... I'm sorry. Sorry guys... I just... I want people to like me, and I

thought... I mean who's more popular than Steve Harrington?"

"Well, I for one liked him more when he didn't act like this," Nancy says. "Just like we all like you when you're just being yourself."

"Okay. I'm sorry... I'm sorry I've been such a dick..."

"It's alright. And I really meant what I said. You're gonna drive them nuts, if you just be yourself," Nancy smiles. Dustin grins.

"Thanks guys... and I'm sorry Will, for being a bad friend," Dustin says and sticks out his hand. He shakes it.

"It's okay. Friends forever, right?"

"You bet! And hey Nance, Jonathan sorry about the whole stealing thing... that was dumb."

"It's okay. We're all dumb sometimes," Jonathan says.

"Yeah," Nancy agrees.

"Anyway... anyone hungry?" Jonathan asks, getting up from his chair and routinely planting a kiss to the top of Nancy's head as he does. She blushes and smiles down at the table.

"Yes!" He and Dustin chorus, and Nancy joins them.

"How about mac and cheese?" Jonathan asks, opening the cabinet.

"Your special one?" He asks, hopeful.

"Of course buddy."

"Yes!" They all chorus again. Jonathan's special mac and cheese is a classic.

Later, when Dustin has gone home after a happy dinner and some more gaming, Nancy turns to him while the three of them are cleaning up in the kitchen.

"You're a good guy, Will. It's good that you said something about how he was acting to girls. A lot of guys wouldn't."

"Just didn't sit right with me. And it was getting grating just being around him," he shrugs.

"You're a good friend for calling him out on it," Jonathan says.

He shrugs again, going back to drying the plate in his hand. After thinking about it he decides to speak his mind on another thing.

"I think it's really nice... that you two have each other. And I like it when you're over here, Nancy."

Nancy gets such a warm, fond smile on her face, looking from Jonathan to him and even if he doesn't feel like how Jonathan feels for Nancy, he totally gets why Jonathan often gets like he gets now, ducking his head down and blushing.

"I love it," Nancy says, glancing at Jonathan again. "And being here, it's the best," she continues, looking at him.

"Yeah. Thanks buddy," Jonathan sets down the dish he was washing, dries his hand on a kitchen towel and then ruffles his hair.

Over the next few days and weeks he can easily observe a noticeable change in Dustin's behavior. He's not snippy to Max anymore and doesn't whine about the couples. He's just funloving and kind again. He thinks Dustin maybe even apologized to Max. It's nice having the old Dustin back. Now all his friends are truly happy. And Jonathan and Nancy just seem happier every day. And it all makes Will very happy.